

Look Out for a Flaming Bravo!


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We had 18 days remaining in our deployment. A petty officer third class was spring-cleaning our workcenter's slightly overstuffed, daily, hazmat locker. When he opened the locker door, a gallon container of isopropyl alcohol with a loose lid fell out and hit the deck. The impact knocked off the lid, and about a quarter of the jug's content spilled onto the deck.

The petty officer began to clean up the mess. When he moved a toolbox under which some alcohol had seeped, a spark was created, and it ignited the alcohol. The next thing the petty officer knew,

he was standing in the middle of a Class Bravo fire. A quick-thinking, nearby shipmate grabbed a CO₂ bottle from its bulkhead mount and extinguished the fire. Although the situation was resolved with no injury or damage, the existence of white smoke was reported to the bridge and subsequently was announced over the ship's 1MC. When the at-sea fire party arrived, we already had informed damage-control central that all was under control, and we already were cleaning the space.

A couple of lessons were learned from this experience: Never store excess hazardous material

in work spaces, and always return hazmat to its appropriate stowage area or locker. Also follow MSDS guidelines for stowing hazmat not currently being used—don't stow it in your work space because it's convenient. Navy MSDS and shipboard hazmat-stowage procedures exist to protect you and the ship—adhere to them! 

Petty Officer Starr is with VAQ-137 and wrote this article while he was command safety petty officer for VAQ-132.



Is it flammable? Is it toxic? You won't know unless you read the MSDS guidelines before you handle hazmat.